

## Opening Remarks-Facing the Methamphetamine Problem in America

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I would like to thank Chairman Souder and Ranking Member Cummings for showing great leadership in calling this important hearing today.

Methamphetamine abuse has been the dominant drug problem in California for a long time and it has become a substantial drug problem in other sections of the West and Southwest, as well. There are indications that it is spreading to other areas of the country, including both rural and urban sections of the South and Midwest.

- **Methamphetamine is a *nationwide* problem:**  
In 2000, 44 states reported meth lab seizures. In 2001, there were over 1300 labs seized and 218 in LA County alone. Over 50 of these were “super” labs. These are labs that had the capability of 10 lbs. or more of “meth.”

- **Meth abuse is on the rise:** Nationwide, seizures of meth labs have significantly increased, from 263 labs in 1994 to 8,462 labs in 2000.

Traditionally associated with white, male, blue-collar workers, “meth” has spread to more diverse population groups that change over time and differ by geographic area. Most recently, it has become the drug of choice by this nation’s children.

- **Methamphetamine abuse is claiming younger victims and destroying families:** In 1999, Meth use among youth nationwide included 3.2% of eighth graders, 4.6% of tenth graders, and 4.7% of twelfth graders.

“Meth” is not usually sold and bought on the streets like many of the other known illicit drugs. Users obtain their supplies of “meth” from friends and acquaintances. It is typically a more closed or hidden sale, prearranged by "networking" with those producing the drug. Often it is sold "by invitation only" at all-night warehouse parties or "raves."

Most alarming is the emerging evidence that methamphetamine are being administered

increasingly via the intravenous route. Injecting this drug puts the user at increased risk contracting HIV/AIDS, hepatitis, and other infectious diseases. We need to find more effective ways to curb the use of this drug. Much of this success will depend on support from Congress and our local law enforcement officers.

Again, I would like to thank the Chairman and Ranking Member for having this hearing. I would also like to welcome and thank each of the witnesses for being here today discuss this important topic and look forward to your testimony.